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ABSTRACT

Although specific definitions and approaches vary, social studies generally involves some form of citizenship education conducive to promoting the greater good of society. Such education is limited neither to academic subjects nor to formal educational processes. In addition to learning the discipline's body of knowledge, citizenship education also requires development of an ethic of caring and community, increased capacity for social criticism and self-reflection, identification with a broader cross-section of others, and greater commitment to acting on the basis of one's understandings and convictions. Although informed by academic study, such development is perhaps most influenced by everyday social interaction. This report, based upon a middle school ethnography, examines the influence of social interaction on citizenship education. Particular attention is focused on the ways the experiences of "mainstream" middle school students can be used to promote self-development for the greater good of society. Contains 41 references. (Author/JAG)

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STUDENT INTERACTION AND EQUITY EDUCATION: INFORMAL SOCIAL STUDIES IN A "MAINSTREAM" MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Abstract

Although specific definitions and approaches vary, social studies generally involves some form of citizenship education conducive to promoting the greater good of society. Such education is limited neither to academic subjects nor to formal educational processes. In addition to learning disciplinary knowledge, citizenship education also requires development of an ethic of caring and community, increased capacity for social criticism and self-reflection, identification with a broader cross-section of others, and greater commitment to acting on the basis of one's understandings and convictions. Although informed by academic study, such development is perhaps most influenced by everyday social interaction. This report, based upon a middle school ethnography, examines the influence of social interaction on citizenship education. Particular attention is focused on the ways the experiences of "mainstream" middle school students can be used to promote self-development for the greater good of society.

STUDENT INTERACTION AND EQUITY EDUCATION:

INFORMAL SOCIAL STUDIES IN A "MAINSTREAM" MIDDLE SCHOOL

Although specific definitions and approaches vary, social studies generally involves some form of citizenship education conducive to promoting the greater good of society (Banks, 1987; Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977; Giroux, 1985; Hertzberg, 1981; Newmann, 1975; Noddings, 1992; Stanley, 1985). Such education is limited neither to academic subjects nor to formal educational processes. In addition to the formal study of academic disciplines such as history, geography, economics and politics, citizenship education also involves developing an ethic of caring and community (Noddings, 1992), a capacity for social criticism and self-reflection (Giroux, 1985), a broader, more multifaceted self-identity (Houser, In Press; Nieto, 1996), and greater commitment to acting upon one's understandings and convictions (Banks, 1989; McIntosh, 1989; Newmann, 1975). Although informed by academic study, such development is perhaps most influenced by the informal social interaction that occurs throughout the day (Cusick, 1991; Greene, 1988; Paley, 1992).

This report, based upon a middle school ethnography, examines the influence of social interaction on citizenship education. More specifically, the paper explores existing opportunities to utilize the daily experiences and relationships of "mainstream" middle school students to promote self-development for the greater good of society.1 First, I describe the theoretical assumptions upon which the study is based. Then, I discuss the research setting, participants and methodology. Next, I present findings related to student interaction and existing opportunities for citizenship education. Finally, I discuss the general implications for classroom practice.

Theoretical Framework

A basic assumption of this report is that citizenship education conducive to societal improvement involves more than the mere learning of information. Social norms are influenced by individual actions, which are in turn influenced by self-identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934). Therefore, any serious attempt to improve society must address not only the learning of information, but fundamental self-development as well. Consistent with this assumption, Baldwin (1988) has noted that no society can adequately advance democratic principles, promote equitable relationships, or understand the frustration and resistance of the oppressed until its individual members acknowledge and confront their personal and collective histories and identities. As Nieto (1996) puts it, one who wishes to affirm diversity must become "a multicultural person" (p. 274).

The notion of becoming a "multicultural person" is promising because it implies substantive self-development rather than the mere learning of information. It suggests coming to see the world, including one's own actions and "self" within that world, from a variety of sociocultural perspectives. Theoretically, an individual who sees the world at least partially from the perspective of others will find it increasingly difficult to maintain an insensitive, unreflective and unyielding orientation toward others (Houser, In Press). Insofar as this is the case, multifaceted self-development is an essential aspect of citizenship education.

Like other forms of psychological growth, self-development involves interpreting and internalizing environmental information. Piaget (1972) has long asserted that psychological development involves a process of elaborating, refining and otherwise "constructing" meaning through interaction with the environment. A sense of mental uncertainty, or cognitive dissonance,

is created when we encounter ideas that challenge our existing understandings. Psychological growth results from our efforts to reconcile this dissonance (Anderson, 1985; Neisser, 1976; Piaget, 1972). This applies not only to the learning of information, but to the very development of self.

Since the human environment is profoundly social in nature, both our experiences (e.g., our observations, interactions and relationships) and the means by which we interpret them (e.g., language) are primarily social as well (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1991). Similarly, much of the dissonance required for self-development involves social interaction. The greatest dissonance is often provided by those whose experiences and perspectives differ most from our own. Ultimately, the broader and deeper the sociocultural experience, the more diverse and substantive will be the development of "self" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hewitt, 1994; Houser, In Press; Mead, 1934; Nieto, 1996).

Although experience is necessary for self-development, experience alone is insufficient. In addition to having the sociocultural experience, self-development also involves discussing and reflecting upon that experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1991). Indeed, it is entirely possible to have an experience without even being aware of it. For experience to have meaning, it must be interpreted, and the tools of human interpretation are linguistic in nature. Thus, through the use of words we are able to reflect upon and otherwise make sense of our experiences (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

Research Setting and Participants

This paper is based on a study that examined the social interactions of two teachers and fifty-three of their sixth-grade students over a period of approximately one and a half years. The setting was Roosevelt Middle School, a public institution serving some 500 sixth, seventh and eight grade students in a predominantly white, upper middle class community located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. During the summer, most of the students at the local land grant university returned to their middle and upper middle class residences in the outlying farming communities. Each year this three-month exodus reduced the population of the city from approximately 24,000 inhabitants to less than 8,000.

Just over the state border a neighboring community of similar size also accommodated a state university. Although the twin communities provided a rich source of musical, theatrical and agricultural events as well as a variety of scholarly activities related to the two universities, these experiences were diminished by an overriding emphasis on organized sports. Large crowds gathered when the interstate rivals played each other in football and basketball, and traffic was often backed up for miles when the local football team played its major in-state adversary.

In spite of the cultural richness that did exist, there was a distinct lack of ethnic diversity in the region. Among the 24,000 inhabitants of Elkton, eighty-eight percent were European American, approximately nine percent were Asian American, and less than three percent were African American. Many of the students at Roosevelt Middle School were the sons and daughters of professors and other university employees. Others came from affluent families who farmed the land surrounding the community. A smaller group of students came from less affluent families living within the community and in neighboring towns and trailer parks. The principal noted that

most of the students were:

> (A)bove average in experience and academic ability, but they've been somewhat sheltered...[from] the social realities that exist in the more densely populated areas of the country.

During the first year the study focused on a class of twenty-four students. This class was observed in homeroom where they received instruction in mathematics, language arts (writing and spelling), reading, science and social studies, and in a variety of non-academic settings throughout the school. During the second year, twenty-nine new students were studied in the same homeroom and non-academic settings. In addition, this class was observed in a second academic setting where it received regular instruction from the art specialist.

The fifty-three students were fairly evenly split by gender. However, with the exception of just seven individuals, the students were all Caucasians of European descent. According to the scores on the annual Metropolitan Achievement Test, the academic achievement of these students ranged from well above the national average to well below. Based on sociograms constructed during the study, the students also ranged from high to low in terms of popularity with their peers. Several students emerged as clearly the most popular, several others as least popular, and the rest fell somewhere between.2

Research Methods and Assumptions

A qualitative methodology and interpretivist framework were utilized to gather the data and guide the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Jacob, 1987, LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, Lofland &

Lofland, 1984; Mishler, 1979; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Specific methods for data collection included participant observation and the recording of field notes, formal and informal interviewing, administration of questionnaires, photographing the educational environment, and gathering school documents, curriculum guides and lesson plans, and student notes and classwork. A sociogram questionnaire, designed in part to identify patterns of privilege and exclusion, was administered both years.

Since social development transcends academic lessons and formal classroom environments, observations were made in a variety of settings throughout the school. In addition to homeroom and art class, students were also observed in the library, school office, cafeteria/gymnasium, hallways, and school grounds. The teachers were observed and informally interviewed in the teachers' lounge as well as their classrooms. Observations were conducted during class, before and after school, during the brief breaks between classes, and during the noon recess.

The data gathered through participant observation were supplemented with interviews. These approaches ranged from formal, highly structured interviews with the teachers and principal to informal (spontaneous, unscheduled) "conversations" with the teachers and students (e.g., Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Lofland & Lofland, 1984). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students and teachers. These meetings included an initial set of questions to guide the general direction of the conversation and adequate space to pursue unanticipated but important issues that emerged during the process.

One of the basic tenets of the qualitative, or interpretivist, paradigm is that human activity is mediated by personal interpretation of context-specific experiences within particular social settings (Jacob, 1987). Rather than responding in some mindless, universal way to environmental

(e.g., physical, social) stimuli, human thought and action are influenced by the interpretation of specific environmental conditions and the integration of these conditions with personal goals, interests and concerns. Moreover, from this perspective "reality" is viewed as sociocognitively constructed rather than biologically or environmentally determined, contextually influenced rather than broadly generalizable, relative rather than absolute, and multifaceted and holistic rather than elemental and reductionistic (Jacob, 1987, Mishler, 1979).

Thus, the primary value of qualitative research lies not in the verification and generalization of universal truths, but in the rich description and thoughtful explanation of complex processes, relationships and environmental influences (Jacob, 1987). It seeks to describe the actions of particular groups and individuals and to explain the perspectives and conditions underlying those actions. The aims of this report are consistent with the goals of the qualitative research paradigm.

Findings and Analysis

The School

According to the statement of philosophy printed in the Student/Parent Handbook, Faculty Handbook, and other official documents, Roosevelt Middle School sought to promote democratic principles, responsible citizenship, and the intellectual, cultural and social development of the whole person. The philosophy stated:

> Roosevelt Middle School is an educational institution based upon democratic principles....The organization serves as a transition from the self-contained class structure of elementary school to the departmental program and activities of high school....To facilitate the development of the whole person, curriculum and activities include decision

making, artistic expression, physical development, responsible citizenship, and an understanding of the diverse cultures represented in this university and agricultural community. Of equal importance is the development of life-long learning skills and the worth of each individual. The curriculum...aims for student development with regard for intellectual, cultural, and social differences...(and) encourages critical thinking...The faculty is selected and evaluated to provide instructional activities that meet the socio-emotional needs of middle school students.

Many of the aims stated in the school philosophy were reflected in practice. For example, each class began the day together in homeroom so the teachers could provide continuity, build a sense of community, and address not only their students' academic needs, but their social and emotional needs as well. The amount of instruction provided by content area specialists gradually increased as the students moved up through the grades. In sixth grade, the students left for physical education and "enrichment" classes such as music and art; however, they remained in homeroom most of the day for instruction in basic subjects such as mathematics, reading and language arts, science and social studies. Finally, consistent with their stated goals, many of the teachers arranged their students' desks in groups rather than rows and utilized experience-based teaching approaches rather than relying solely upon direct instruction.

Although the goals and practices at Roosevelt reflected many basic tenets of middle school philosophy (e.g., Alexander, et. al, 1969; Atwell, 1987; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), certain contradictions existed as well. For example, in spite of the rhetoric about diversity, democracy and critical thinking, the faculty was predominantly European

American (with the exception of two teachers), critical thinking about controversial social issues was seldom observed, and the "democratic principles" espoused in the school philosophy were often reduced to "engineered consent" (Apple & Beane, 1995) if applied at all to teacher-student relationships.

The Teachers and Their Perspectives

Mrs. Daniels

Like most of the school population, the two teachers in this study were middle class European Americans. Mrs. Daniels, the homeroom teacher, had taught for eighteen years. She had earned a masters degree at the local university and was married to one of the professors. Mrs. Daniels spent many hours at the school, often working long after the students left for home.

In addition to her busy career, Mrs. Daniels had a hectic personal life that involved community obligations, concern over the financial and personal struggles of her adult children, and reconciling the fact that her husband spent considerable time "gigging" as "a professional jazz musician" while she remained at home caring for his aging parents. Mrs. Daniels described herself as hard working and extremely goal-oriented. "I'm a doer. Lot's of times it's obligations. I keep busy....I like things neat and in their place, and I like things done."

As a sixth grade homeroom teacher, Mrs. Daniels was expected to cover the "core" courses (i.e., mathematics, reading, spelling, writing, science and social studies), Student Learning Objectives for "every subject taught in the Elkton School District," skills to be tested on the annual Metropolitan Achievement Test, units on sex education (complete with a 200 page teacher's manual) and drug abuse, and numerous other topics during the year. Given the

considerable amount of material Mrs. Daniels attempted to teach, her instruction almost always seemed hurried, immediate, and at times, urgent. As she commented one day, "Time is really limited...We've gotten behind and there is so much to cover." On another occasion she noted, "The problem is, we have spread ourselves too thin. We try to teach feelings and extra things too much." In Mrs. Daniels' view there was simply too much to do and too little time. As a result, she observed, teachers "don't take much time to smell the roses."

Since Mrs. Daniels sought to cover a maximum amount of material in limited time, she viewed student interaction as interference. To facilitate greater efficiency she generally restricted academic tasks to silent, individual seatwork. Since there was almost always more work to be completed, little time remained for student interaction. When the students were permitted to talk with each other, they were expected to remain "on task." Thus, when asked what kinds of things were okay to talk about in class, one student responded, "Anything that has to do with school or what you're reading about or talking about. It's not okay to talk about our stuff unless it's with her privately."

Although verbal interaction was discouraged, the students' desks were nonetheless grouped in small clusters ranging in number from three to six. Mrs. Daniels' decision to group her students was undoubtedly influenced by the strong advocacy for "cooperative learning" within her district and school. However, her decision was also based upon management and efficiency concerns. For example, one function of the small group was to provide a ready means of exchanging and checking mathematics homework and spelling examinations. Another function was for students to proofread each others' written work before turning it in to the teacher. Therefore, although "cooperative learning" not among Mrs. Daniels' priorities, she was able to utilize the groups to

more efficiently cover her curriculum. Finally, consistent with her desire to maximize efficiency by reducing discussion, Mrs. Daniels carefully arranged the groups to separate friends who might be inclined to visit (McNeil, 1986, has addressed in detail the problem of subjugating learning to efficiency).3

Social Studies in Homeroom

Like many classrooms (Gross, 1977; Hahn, 1985; Houser, 1995), formal attention to the social studies was underrepresented within Mrs. Daniels' overall curriculum. Although included in the daily schedule, social studies was often the first class eliminated when additional time was needed for other activities. The available social studies materials--an outdated set of textbooks, three globes, a map of Europe, and a set of encyclopedias--were seldom used. Nor were these materials replaced with documents or literature, newspapers or magazines, guest speakers or artifacts, or any of the other items typically used to supplement traditional resources.

To help satisfy the Student Learning Objectives for social studies (which focused on the relatively low-level acquisition of knowledge and skills related to world history, geography and politics), Mrs. Daniels taught a unit on Medieval England. The unit included a modest amount of reading from the textbook, written responses to textbook questions, and brief class discussions. Some art work was also included since a primary focus of the unit was to develop visual displays for Open House.

Although social studies was seldom formally addressed, social education occurred nonetheless. While not intended as part of the official social studies curriculum, some of the most engaging class discussions focused on vital social issues. One day, for example, Mrs. Daniels

passionately expressed her frustrations over the United States' "wasteful" decision to spend vast sums of money spying on other countries: "I hope all of America complains about spending all that money [spying] on a country who is too busy feeding her people to even care about our spy satellite." Another day, she pushed her students to consider the relationships between the increasing violence in society and the messages conveyed in contemporary music, films and television. And on yet another occasion, Mrs. Daniels spent an entire period telling about her own childhood, a fascinating and unexpected account of perseverance in overcoming poverty and abuse. Although infrequent and often abbreviated, these conversations were significant to the students. As one girl noted, "The class likes her stories...We get to know Mrs. Daniels through her stories." Similarly, one of the boys said, "[Mrs. Daniels] tell(s) good stories. Her stories are awesome!"4

These discussions focused on contemporary social issues and vital concerns related to national and international relationships. When Mrs. Daniels addressed these problems and relaxed the rules limiting discussion, the students' comments, questions and overall participation increased markedly. However, few of these conversations were intentionally tied the social studies curriculum. The discussion about the spy satellite was prompted by a news story Mrs. Daniels just happened to hear, the discussion of violence in society was initiated by an "inappropriate" comment made in class, and the story about Mrs. Daniels' childhood was meant to benefit an unpopular student named Terry who was self-conscious about his family's low economic status.

In addition to these unofficial "social studies" discussions, other unintended forms of social education also occurred in homeroom. In spite of Mrs. Daniels' efforts to minimize nonacademic discussion, each day her students seemed to identify and create new ways to interact with their

friends. As we shall see, the relationships resulting from these efforts had a very real impact on the development of their social perspectives and actions (Cusick, 1991).

Mrs. Cook

Mrs. Cook, the art specialist with fifteen years experience, taught five periods of art to sixth, seventh and eighth grade classes. Unlike Mrs. Daniels, Mrs. Cook was not required to cover an extensive repertoire of academic material during the school year. Nor was she expected to prepare her students for the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Since the academic focus in the art class was less urgent than in homeroom, Mrs. Cook's concerns differed from those of Mrs. Daniels. Mrs. Cook's primary frustration was that with so many students to teach each week, she was unable to establish meaningful relationships. As she said:

> I'm flattered when students come to me for advice, like with their social problems--those few kids I do get to know personally....I enjoy the "Ah ha!" experience and those moments when students come to me for advice...[However], the specialist doesn't get to know the students very well.

Although Mrs. Cook aligned her art activities with certain styles and periods throughout history (beginning with a unit on prehistoric art and ending with the Italian Renaissance), the class was primarily a studio course rather than art history or art appreciation. Therefore, unlike homeroom, the students were involved in drawing and painting rather than reading, writing and studying for examinations. Since the pressure to cover the curriculum was less intense than in homeroom, Mrs. Cook permitted her students work at their own speed within certain broad

parameters.

In addition to working at their own pace, Mrs. Cook allowed her students to sit where they wished and to visit openly with each other. Given this freedom, the students chose to sit with their friends and discuss their shared interests and experiences. As a result, Mrs. Cook's claimed that her classes were:

> (S)ocial--too social. It's tough to keep them on task. They write notes to each other and talk. [The biggest problem is] mainly talking to each other. I have to explain things over and over.

Because of her flexibility, Mrs. Cook often had to request that the class quiet down or stop horse playing. Nonetheless, largely because she did not want to jeopardize her fragile relationships, Mrs. Cook seldom removed the students from their preferred groups. Even when she separated them from their friends, the students were seldom isolated for more than a single class period.

The Students and Their Perspectives

Cusick (1973) concluded in his classic study that the high school student's perspective is primarily social in nature. This was also true of the goals, interests and concerns of the Roosevelt sixth-graders. As one of the girls in Mrs. Daniels' homeroom noted, "The best part of school is getting to see my friends." Similarly, one of the most academically oriented boys acknowledged, "School is for learning--to go on to college and a job. Usually, though, it's a place to socialize."

Another similarity between Cusick's participants and Mrs. Daniels' students was that their interactions typically occurred within small, tightly knit "cliques," or groups of friends, who

shared similar experiences, interests and opportunities. In the mornings, Mrs. Daniels' cliques visited in the parking lot while waiting for the rest of their friends to arrive, at noontime they ate and played together, and in the moments between classes they hurriedly talked while retrieving their books from the hallway lockers.

Finally, like Cusick's participants, Mrs. Daniels' homeroom students often identified themselves and their peers in terms of the groups with whom they associated. For example, according to a popular "athlete" named Steven, the cliques in Mrs. Daniels' class consisted of "athletes" and "skaters," "teacher's pets" and "trouble makers," "druggies" (drug users) and "nerds" (students who were nonathletic, studious and relatively unpopular). There were also "cheerleaders," "preppies" ("intellectual" students who were preparing for college), "wavers" (unpopular students who vacillated, or wavered, between groups), and so on.5

Informal Student Interaction During Class

Although Mrs. Daniels discouraged nonacademic interaction, her students found varied ways to visit with their friends even during the most restricted occasions. While more covert in homeroom than in other settings, student interaction was as prevalent in Mrs. Daniels' class as it was throughout the day. To attend to their social interests, the students whispered messages when Mrs. Daniels was not looking, talked quietly as she helped others with their lessons, passed notes from desk to desk, silently mouthed messages across the room, and visited excitedly whenever she stepped out of the class. They also used hand signals and written messages to arrange covert meetings at the pencil sharpener, at the encyclopedia case, in the hallway near their lockers, and in the restrooms down the corridor.

Informal social interaction was also prevalent in art class where the students experienced greater freedom of movement and speech. One day, for example, I sat with Steven and the other three "athletes" at the end of one of the large worktables in the art room. Although the students occasionally commented on their art projects or joked about their teachers, the discussion invariably returned to the subject of sports. Jeff, the leader of the clique, talked extensively about his goal of becoming a professional football player. Similarly, Steven and the others discussed their sporting interests and accomplishments, team affiliations, and so forth.

As the period proceeded, our discussion, like the others around the room, became increasingly loud and more animated. Engaged in the conversation, it was not until I heard the distant ringing of a bell and Mrs. Cook's voice rise to a near yell that I looked up and saw the teacher staring in our direction. The class stopped talking and listened to Mrs. Cook's angry warning that we were getting too loud. However, it was only a matter of moments before the students resumed their conversations and the volume again began to rise.

Acceptance and Exclusion

As Cusick (1991) has demonstrated, informal social interaction in school provides opportunities for students to learn skills and information related to community participation throughout their lives. However, the same interaction can also reinforce and perpetuate existing race-, class- and gender-based systems of acceptance and exclusion:

> In their social groups, students learn certain things related to citizenship. They learn to practice social attitudes and modes of participation, make judgements, exercise values, and refine social practices they will use later in society. They learn the benefits of association in

> small primary groups and the opprobrium associated with violating group norms. They learn to express collective judgements about those outside the group, judgements that are frequently class and culture based. (Cusick, 1991, p. 279)

Consistent with these observations, many aspects of community life were learned through informal interaction within and between the student groups at Roosevelt Middle School. While these interactions sometimes fostered broad social acceptance, more often they seemed to exclude and limit social participation. In the most extreme instances, individuals were completely denied access to group membership. This was the case with Terry, the student Mrs. Daniels had sought to help by telling the story of her own childhood.

Terry, a tall, thin, modestly dressed boy, was ostracized by a variety of students throughout the year. One boy wrote, for example, that "Terry is stuckup and a fag!" Another student cited Terry as the person he would "least like to find at a party." Still another boy loudly taunted, "You're a girl." Steven identified Terry as a "waver," explaining that he was constantly trying to gain acceptance into different groups. Steven noted that Terry was currently "trying real hard to be a skater."

One day the class visited loudly while Mrs. Daniels was momentarily out of the room. Several students were out of their seats. Three boys had left the room and were outside a locked door marked with a sign that read, "DO NOT USE THIS DOOR!" Anticipating that their teacher would soon return, the boys were banging on the door and yelling for their peers to let them back in. Suddenly Terry said, "Quiet you guys, Mrs. Daniels is coming!"

"Oh, Terry, you're so cool--I wish I was like you," said one of Steven's friends. Most of the

rest of the class simply appeared not to notice Terry's warning.

A moment later, a popular girl returned from the hallway and cautioned, "Mrs. Daniels is coming." Several students repeated her warning. Steven's friend quickly opened the locked door. The students silently slipped back into their seats as Mrs. Daniels walked into the room.

In this instance, the class ignored Terry's caution while heeding the virtually identical warning of a more popular student. In so doing, it denied Terry the acceptance frequently gained by others who performed similar actions. For Terry, this was just one of numerous forms of rejection experienced throughout the year. For the class, it was just one of many ways they were learning to discriminate and exclude.

The "Athletes"

While some students were denied access to virtually every group, others experienced widespread popularity. This was the case with Steven and Jeff, the two most popular athletes in class. Although all four members of the athletic clique spent considerable time together, the relationship between Jeff and Steven clearly formed the nucleus of the group. Understanding this relationship will provide insight to the ways these students' experiences can be used to advance their social development.

While both boys were new to Roosevelt Middle School, Mrs. Daniels' homeroom contained more of Steven's former classmates than Jeff's friends from prior years. Thus, Steven initially enjoyed greater popularity at Roosevelt than did Jeff. In September, Steven was elected class president. On the sociogram questionnaire conducted in October, Jeff placed Steven's name at the

top of his list of "best friends." Conversely, Jeff's name was completely excluded from Steven's list.

As the year progressed, Jeff became increasingly popular, and the two boys began to spend more time together. By Christmas break Jeff and Steven had become practically inseparable. They spent time together before and after school, during art class, and whenever possible in homeroom. Gradually, Jeff began to assume greater control within the clique and the class in general.

There were several reasons for the popularity of the athletic clique. For instance, the athletes carefully dressed and groomed themselves in ways that were valued by their classmates. As one student noted, "Jeff is the coolest kid in class because he dresses neat [and] he's fun to be around." The athletes also tended to take more risks (e.g., by defying their teachers) than many of the other students. Thus, another student observed that Jeff is the "coolest" kid in class because "he isn't scared of many things."

Although there were a variety of explanations for the group's popularity, its status was most closely tied to its athletic orientation. Within a larger community that prized organized sports, these four boys were considered by many, including themselves, among the most accomplished athletes in the sixth grade. As one member of the group stated, "Jeff's the best in basketball, and he's good in football, too." Similarly, Jeff said of himself, "I can beat all the sixth-graders in basketball." Mrs. Daniels concurred that Jeff was an exceptional athlete:

> He almost beat Mr. Hawthorne [a sixth grade teacher] in a race. He's probably the fastest kid in school.

However, Mrs. Daniels also noted that:

> Jeff is competitive... (His) problem is that he's 'cool' [arrogant]...and macho, probably with good reason...But he's blunt. He'll hurt kids' feelings--not on purpose, but he'll hurt them.

In mid-March, Steven and Jeff had a disagreement over a girl in another class. Each boy wanted her to be his girlfriend. As a result of the disagreement, Jeff began to spend more time with a third member of the clique, and Steven and the fourth member went their own way. Jeff and his friend sometimes included the fourth member in their activities and conversations, but they never included Steven.

At first Jeff and Steven traded insults, with Steven's friend serving as a go-between. However, as the tension continued, Steven's friend also began to spend less time with him and more time with the others. One Wednesday in art, shortly after the initial argument, Steven began the period sitting next to his remaining friend. Half way through class Steven's friend got up and moved to the table where Jeff and his friend were sitting. The three boys visited and laughed together for several minutes before Steven, tentatively, approached their table. Steven avoided looking at Jeff and sat down at the outer edge of the group. There was an awkward silence. Then Jeff got up and walked away.

A moment later, Steven got up, walked over to where I was seated, and began talking. After a few minutes he walked to a piece of equipment located near the door and remained there until the period ended approximately thirty minutes later. During this entire time he worked on a portion of his project that had taken other students just a few minutes to complete. Although Steven visited casually with some of the other students who came near, he did not return to his

seat. Steven was left without a clique.

The next day, Thursday, Steven came to Mrs. Daniels' class in the morning, but he left school just before art and did not return that day. On Friday Steven told me he had been sick the previous day. That afternoon he spent the whole art period wandering about the room, visiting with me, and otherwise avoiding the tables where the athletes sat. During this time, Steven spoke of the situation with Jeff:

> I don't think we'll get back together. I said 'hi' to him on Monday and Tuesday, but he (ignored) me, so I just decided to do something else.

Steven continued:

> Jeff is popular, but a lot of people really hate him. He's mean--he'll hit people and laugh. He likes to tease, but he gets mad if he gets teased. Todd (Jeff's friend) just follows him around. Jeff likes that. I used to do that too--just follow him around. I thought he was so cool! But now I go off with other people. He has his group, but I can be with lots of people.

Approximately five weeks passed this way, with Steven and Jeff not speaking or sitting with each other. Jeff, who had once listed Steven as his best friend, now said:

> He tries to be like others. He copies me, and he lies about us. [He] gets jealous of us. It [the entire confrontation] bothered him more than us.

Similarly, Steven's final friend concluded that

> Steven was more worried about the relationship than Jeff because Jeff carries more weight--more power...he's athletic and outgoing--more of a leader than Steven.

Finally, one morning in late April I observed Jeff and Steven casually leaning on each other while discussing a display on Mrs. Daniels' bulletin board. Relegated to their former status, the other two athletes lingered in the background. When later asked how things were going with Jeff, Steven replied:

> It's going better. We're becoming friends again. He just walked up and said "sorry" to me one day. I don't know why. We don't hang out as much as we used to--but more than before. Todd apologized at the same time as Jeff. It feels (better) for me--I don't get dirty glares and teased always now.

For approximately five weeks, Steven had been an outsider. In his own terminology, Steven had become a "waver." Like Terry, he was "trying real hard to be" a member of a clique that would not accept him. Unable to sit with his former friends, he wandered about the art class. Steven was so uncomfortable selecting a seat in art, a setting where such decisions were made by the students, that on at least one occasion he left school before the class began. First one former friend and then another sided with Jeff, leaving Steven without a clique.

Unlike Terry, Steven had a number of options. He was popular with many of his peers. As Steven had said, "He [Jeff] has his group, but I can be with lots of people." Nonetheless, although Steven could have been with "lots of people," his words and actions clearly indicated that he wanted to be with Jeff and his former clique.

Implications for Practice

Citizenship education is important in all settings, including mainstream environments such as Roosevelt Middle School. The general differences in status between the various cliques in Mrs. Daniels' homeroom, along with the particular views and actions of the dominant students (e.g., the athletes) toward less powerful individuals like Terry, support Cusick's (1991) claim that many destructive attitudes, modes of participation, judgements, values and practices are being refined during everyday interaction for "use later in society." Add to this the discriminatory perspectives based on gender and sexual orientation (e.g., the fact that Jeff and Steven viewed a female student as an object to be possessed rather than valuing her as a multidimesional and self-determining human being; comments such as "You're a girl" and "Terry is stuckup and a fag!"), and there can be little question regarding the need for continued social development among the Roosevelt sixth-graders.

Fortunately, along with the considerable need for citizenship education within mainstream schools, numerous opportunities exist as well. As a relatively simple example, consider the physical proximity of the students in Mrs. Daniels' homeroom. Ironically, Mrs. Daniels' seating arrangements, designed to minimize classroom disruptions by separating friends, resulted in groupings that were far more heterogeneous than when the students organized themselves according to their shared experiences, interests and status. Although these groups were not designed or utilized to promote social development (e.g., Mrs. Daniels believed there was too little time to "teach feelings"), the point is that they could have been used for this purpose. Their relative heterogeneity created at least the possibility for interaction among students with varied experiences and perspectives.

In addition to developmental opportunities related to physical grouping, it is also possible to increase growth through the social studies curriculum. Mrs. Daniels was interested in local, national and international events. She was also sensitive to power differentials among her students. With modest preparation she might have drawn important parallels between the existing curriculum (e.g., the middle ages; the feudal system) and contemporary systems of power and control influencing students and society today. Similarly, the discussion about the spy satellite might have been used to help students think more critically about the motives and actions of their governmental leaders, as well as the population that elected them. Related conversations might have focused on the need to understand and participate in democratic processes (e.g., voting, voicing one's views, compromising, resisting), ethical considerations related to the production, distribution and consumption of shared resources, the possibilities and limitations of technology (or any other panacea) as a tool for positive social change, and rights and responsibilities related to self-determination and social control.

Consistent with the principles of curriculum integration, there were also opportunities to promote social development through other academic subjects. The combination of reading and language arts, for example, was allotted one and a half hours per day. Since the materials used in literacy education are inevitably about something, and since there is perhaps nothing more urgent than the social issues we currently face, it makes sense to select materials and activities that simultaneously advance both the goals of literacy education and the social studies.

Fortunately, there is an abundance of quality adolescent literature that addresses important social and cultural issues. For example, consistent with the medieval European theme, Mrs. Daniels might have selected de Angeli's (1949) Newbery Award winning The door in the wall

This well-researched piece of historical fiction describes how the son of an English knight is forced by circumstances beyond his control to reassess his most basic values and assumptions. Another Newbery Award winner, Speare's (1983) The sign of the Beaver, is set in Colonial America. This novel describes a colonial boy whose interaction with a Native American youth facilitates deep reflection upon his own prejudices and privileges and a growing appreciation of the knowledge and skills of others.6

Books like these represent quality literature. However, they could also be used to promote social development and critical self-examination. Since the main characters in both novels would seem familiar to many of the Roosevelt sixth-graders (e.g., both characters were "successful," industrious males of European descent), it is reasonable to assume that students such as Jeff and Steven might readily identify with them.7 This initial familiarity could be used to help mainstream students further relate, along with the protagonists in the novels, to the importance of seriously examining their own assumptions and actions. Although social studies materials should represent a variety of cultural perspectives, novels such these are essential because they describe instances in which members of the sociocultural mainstream are compelled to question their unexamined assumptions and privileges.

In addition to the subjects taught in homeroom, significant opportunities for citizenship education also existed in Mrs. Cook's art class. According to Eisner (1991), art is a means of representing human experience in nontextual ways. Specific methods, materials and styles of artistic representation do not actually constitute the "art" of a particular time and location. Rather, these are merely tools of representation used by artists to externalize their perceptions, interpretations and concerns. Therefore, a comprehensive treatment of the "art" of any given

period needs to address not only the tools but also the focus and perspectives of those doing the representing. Since artistic representation throughout history has been influenced by social conditions, experiences, events and relationships central to the artists' lives, these too should be included in the program of study.

Based on such an approach, Mrs. Cook might have supplemented her units on ancient Egypt, the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance by discussing ways in which art has been used for centuries to deify religious figures, idolize political leaders, commemorate war and conquest, and aggrandize the elite. Noting that not until the last couple of centuries have western artists dared use their work to publicly criticize dominant perspectives and practices, she might also have introduced the essential function of art as a form of social criticism. Exploring the social and psychological aspects of artistic expression, the internal contradictions that occur when subjective representation is externally restricted, and the evolving roles of artists in society introduces an essential dimension to the study of art. Insofar as this exploration can also be related to students and society, it is equally important to the social studies.

Although citizenship education can be facilitated through formal instruction, perhaps the greatest opportunities for substantive social development involve informal experiences, relationships and interactions. Steven's dilemma provided exactly this kind of opportunity. As the once-popular athlete struggled to reconcile his second-class status as a "waver," he experienced considerable dissonance. Steven's frustration and confusion were authentic and deserved his teachers' compassion. However, the dissonance he experienced also represented a valuable opportunity to help him contemplate the relationship between his own temporary status and the more sustained, systematic marginalization of others.

The disagreement between Steven and Jeff created the experience and dissonance necessary for psychological development. What remained was a need for discussion, refection and action. Whether through private conversations or structured lessons, problems and concerns must be identified, or "named" (Greene, 1988), before they can be further addressed. In Steven's case, identifying his concerns (e.g., his own rejection, marginalization, and loss of power) might have been a fairly simple and straight-forward process.

Once a problem has been named, it is possible to contemplate a variety of related factors. In time, Steven's teachers might have encouraged him to think more critically about the causes of his disagreement with Jeff, the nature of his relationship with the athletes, and the extent of his own desire for popularity and control. Steven's teachers might also have helped him recognize that his temporary status as a "waver" was an isolated instance in a much broader system of stratification and exclusion. By helping students like Steven develop greater ability to empathize with those who have endured years (and even lifetimes) of oppression, it is possible to gradually increase their range of social identification.8

Finally, students like Steven (and Jeff) need to consider the ways they contribute to the marginalization of those with whom they have begun to identify. For example, Steven might have been shown how his continued support of the athletes' attitudes and actions helped perpetuate both the marginalization of individuals like Terry and the existence of broader social systems that systematically limit the life chances of entire populations (Bullivant, 1986). In addition to helping mainstream students cope with their personal difficulties, at this point it would also be possible to help them assess their responsibilities and relationships, conceptualize the kind of "self" they wish to become, and consider the necessary actions required to become that kind of person. (See

Houser, In Press, for a detailed discussion and pedagogical framework for "multicultural self-development for the dominant culture").

In summary, numerous needs and opportunities for citizenship education exist within "mainstream" educational settings. Citizenship education can be promoted through formal, academic instruction as well as informal social interactions occurring throughout the day. In either case, the process involves having, discussing and reflecting upon a variety of substantive sociocultural experiences. Rather than the mere learning of information, education for the greater good within pluralistic and democratic societies involves fundamental self-development. This includes developing a greater sense of caring and community, an increased capacity for social and personal criticism, identification with a broader range of others, and commitment to acting on the basis of one's knowledge and convictions.

Social development is inevitably limited by the range of sociocultural experiences, perspectives and relationships available within any given environment. No single setting can provide all the experiences needed for optimum social development. Therefore, although the existing opportunities at schools like Roosevelt are necessary, they are ultimately insufficient. Nonetheless, since self-development is a gradual process utilizing prior knowledge to construct new meaning, the available opportunities in such settings are vital. While they may not be conclusive, they provide an essential beginning.

In conclusion, citizenship education for the well-being of all groups and individuals is both necessary and possible. However, this requires social development among all groups and individuals in society, including members of the sociocultural mainstream. In addition to formal academic instruction, such education also requires utilizing informal student interaction as a

means of developing more equitable selves. The aims and approaches discussed in this paper are consistent with the broad goals of the social studies, the tenets of middle school philosophy, the rights of all people to be valued and affirmed, and the desire of teachers to construct more meaningful relationships with their students. Given the urgency of our situation, we can ill-afford to overlook the opportunities for equity education that inevitably exist in even the most homogeneous of settings.

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Footnotes

1. This paper follows Banks' (1989) use of the term "mainstream" to refer to the prevailing sociocultural groups within any given society who, by virtue of their political and economic advantages and their sheer numbers, exercise greatest control over existing social norms and economic resources. The paper assumes that within a democratic and pluralistic society, the sociocultural mainstream must be just as self-critical and willing to compromise as any other individual or group. Within such a society, if any individual or group is required to challenge its existing beliefs and actions, all individuals and groups should be expected to do the same.

2. "Popularity" is an important concept in this paper. It was used by the students as one means of distinguishing between different individuals and groups. "Popular" is defined in the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary as: "approved of, admired, or liked by most people. 2. Having many friends" (1983, p. 618). Based on this definition, I will use "popularity" to refer to the extent to which the students were approved of or admired by their peers and the number of friends they had in homeroom.

3. Mrs. Daniels did make certain exceptions to this rule. Although he was quite disruptive, Mrs. Daniels did permit one of her students sit with his two best friends. She noted that the students in this small, unpopular clique had formed an important friendship that needed her support, even if it resulted in extra work.

4. I use the terms "girls" and "boys" because they are the prevalent forms of self-reference used by the participants. However, it is important to note that these labels are problematic because they tend to reduce humans both by age and gender.

5. This system of classification clearly privileged some groups while marginalizing others. Within this milieu, the labels "athlete" and "cheerleader" did not carry the negative, anti-normative

connotations conveyed by labels such as "teacher's pets," "druggies," "preppies," "nerds" and "wavers." Nonetheless, consistent with the claims of theorists like Freire (1970) who argue that the oppressed often participate in their own subjugation, the system was utilized by many of the very students it marginalized. In some cases, it was even used by the teachers.

6. Speare's novel has been criticized on several grounds (e.g., for failing to permit Native American characters to speak in their own voices). While these criticisms merit serious attention, the book nonetheless provides an excellent model of critical self-reflection among European Americans as they begin to interact with members of other sociocultural groups. Like other materials, each sample of adolescent literature should be thoughtfully examined to determine whether and how it should be used.

7. This claim is consistent with the notion that those in power--the sociocultural mainstream--often tend to see themselves as "normal" and others as different (Ellsworth, 1992; McIntosh, 1989; Nieto, 1996). To a great extent, multicultural educators have sought to problematize unexamined assumptions about what is considered "normal" and "familiar" and who gets to decide.

8. While Steven is the focus of this paper, self-development is equally important for Jeff, Terry and the others. Insofar as oppression is relative and context-specific, each student will need to be both challenged and supported.